

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims

Claim 1 (original): A method of managing communication between nodes of a network, involving both dynamic and static assignment of communication time slots, the method comprising:

establishing a network comprising a plurality of dynamic nodes, network communication being accomplished via assignment of time slots of a time multiplex structure, said plurality of dynamic nodes participating in a dynamic assignment protocol, each of said plurality of dynamic nodes being capable of assigning itself a time slot from available time slots of said time multiplex structure, said network further comprising at least one static node not participating in the dynamic assignment protocol; and

pre-assigning a time slot in said time multiplex structure to said at least one static node.

Claim 2 (original): The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of: pre-assigning a time slot in said time multiplex structure to at least one dynamic node of said plurality of dynamic nodes.

Claim 3 (original): The method of claim 2, wherein said at least one dynamic node of said plurality of dynamic nodes is a surrogate node coordinating communication between said at least one static node and said plurality of dynamic nodes.

Claim 4 (original): The method of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of static nodes.

Claim 5 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein said at least one static node is not capable of participating in the dynamic assignment protocol.

Claim 6 (canceled)

Claim 7 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein said time multiplex structure comprises a time division multiple access protocol.

Claim 8 (original): The method of claim 1, further comprising a frequency division multiple access protocol operating in conjunction with said time multiplex structure.

Claim 9 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein said dynamic assignment protocol comprises a unifying slot assignment protocol.

Claim 10 (original): A communication system, comprising:
a network of nodes, each node being capable of communication during
time slots of a time multiplex structure;
a plurality of nodes of said network of nodes participating in a dynamic
assignment protocol, each node of said plurality of nodes being capable of
assigning itself a time slot from available time slots of said time multiplex
structure; and
at least one static node, said at least one static node belonging to said
network of nodes;
wherein said at least one static node is pre-assigned a time slot in a frame
of said time multiplex structure.

Claim 11 (canceled)

Claim 12 (original): The communication system according to claim 10,
wherein said at least one static node is a node not capable of participating in said
dynamic assignment protocol.

Claim 13 (original): The communication system according to claim 10,
wherein said dynamic assignment protocol comprises a unifying slot assignment
protocol.

Claim 14 (original): The communication system according to claim 10, wherein said time multiplex structure comprises a time division multiple access structure.

Claim 15 (original): The communication system according to claim 10, wherein said network of nodes further comprises a frequency division multiple access structure integrated with said time multiplex structure.

Claim 16 (original): The communication system according to claim 10, further comprising a dynamic node participating in said dynamic assignment protocol, said dynamic node having a pre-assigned broadcast time slot in a frame of said time multiplex structure.

Claim 17 (original): The communication system according to claim 16, wherein said dynamic node serves as a surrogate for said at least one static node.

Claim 18 (original): A communication system, comprising:
a network of nodes, each node being capable of communication during time slots of a time multiplex structure;
first dynamic node means for participating in a dynamic assignment protocol, said first dynamic node means being capable of assigning itself a time

slot from available time slots of said time multiplex structure, said first dynamic node means being a member of said network of nodes; and

static node means for participating in the network, said static node means belonging to said network of nodes;

wherein said static node means is pre-assigned a time slot in a frame of said time multiplex structure.

Claim 19 (original): The communication system according to claim 18, further comprising second dynamic node means for participating in said dynamic assignment protocol, said second dynamic node means having a pre-assigned time slot in a frame of said time multiplex structure.

Claim 20 (original): The communication system according to claim 19, wherein said second dynamic node means serves as a surrogate for said static node means.

Claim 21 (previously presented): The method of claim 1, wherein said at least one static node does not participate in the dynamic assignment protocol even though it is otherwise capable of doing so.

Claim 22 (previously presented): The communication system according to claim 10, wherein said at least one static node does not participate in the dynamic assignment protocol even though it is otherwise capable of doing so.

Claim 23 (previously presented): A communication system, comprising:
a network of nodes, each node being capable of communication during
time slots of a time multiplex structure;
a plurality of nodes of said network of nodes participating in a dynamic
assignment protocol, each node of said plurality of nodes being capable of
assigning itself a time slot from available time slots of said time multiplex
structure;
at least one static node, said at least one static node belonging to said
network of nodes, said at least one static node having a pre-assigned a time slot
in a frame of said time multiplex structure; and
a dynamic node participating in said dynamic assignment protocol, said
dynamic node having a pre-assigned time slot in a frame of said time multiplex
structure, said dynamic node being capable of serving as a surrogate for
communication with said at least one static node.

Claim 24 (previously presented): A method of managing communication
between nodes of a network, involving both dynamic and static assignment of
communication time slots, the method comprising:
establishing a network comprising a plurality of dynamic nodes, network
communication being accomplished via assignment of time slots of a time
multiplex structure, said plurality of dynamic nodes participating in a dynamic
assignment protocol, each of said plurality of dynamic nodes being capable of

assigning itself a time slot from available time slots of said time multiplex structure, said network further comprising at least one static node not participating in the dynamic assignment protocol;

pre-assigning a time slot in the time multiplex structure to at least one static node;

pre-assigning a time slot in the time multiplex structure to at least one dynamic node of the plurality of dynamic nodes; and

using the at least one dynamic node with a pre-assigned time slot to facilitate communication between the at least one static node and the plurality of dynamic nodes.

Claim 25 (previously presented): A communication system, comprising:
a network of nodes, each node being capable of communication during
time slots of a time multiplex structure;

first node means for participating in a dynamic assignment protocol, said
first node means being capable of assigning itself a time slot from available time
slots of the time multiplex structure; and

second node means for participating in the network of nodes but not being
capable of participating in the dynamic assignment protocol;

wherein said second node means is pre-assigned a time slot in a frame of
said time multiplex structure.

Claim 26 (previously presented): The communication system according to claim 25, further comprising third node means for participating in said dynamic assignment protocol, said third node means having a pre-assigned time slot in a frame of said time multiplex structure.

Claim 27 (previously presented): The communication system according to claim 26, wherein said third node means serves as a surrogate for communication with said second node means.

Claim 28 (new): A method of managing communication between nodes of a network, involving both dynamic and static assignment of communication time slots, the method comprising:

establishing a network comprising a plurality of dynamic nodes, network communication being accomplished via assignment of time slots of a time multiplex structure, said plurality of dynamic nodes participating in a dynamic assignment protocol, each of said plurality of dynamic nodes being capable of identifying an available time slot of said time multiplex structure and of assigning itself an identified available time slot, said network further comprising at least one static node not participating in the dynamic assignment protocol; and

pre-assigning a time slot in said time multiplex structure to said at least one static node.

Claim 29 (new): A communication system, comprising:

a network of nodes, each node being capable of communication during time slots of a time multiplex structure;

a plurality of nodes of said network of nodes participating in a dynamic assignment protocol, each node of said plurality of nodes being capable of assigning itself a time slot from available time slots of said time multiplex structure; and

at least one static node, said at least one static node belonging to said network of nodes;

wherein said at least one static node cannot request a time slot but instead is initially-assigned a time slot in a frame of said time multiplex structure.